

## Exercise Keeps Your Mind Sharp

We know exercise is good for your heart. Exercise is also good for your brain. It increases blood flow, which transports oxygen and nutrients to body tissues, including your brain. Exercise can slow the loss of brain tissue that typically begins in your 40s. By doing this, it seems to delay or even prevent specific aging-related changes in your brain. In some cases, exercise may even provide memory improvement.

Exercise is most beneficial for memory improvement when it's done regularly — at least three times each week. Your ultimate goal should be to exercise most days of the week for at least 30 minutes a day. If you are just getting started, don't worry about the time. Break up your exercise sessions throughout the day, for instance into 10-minute periods of activity. Once you get going, you may find that adding more exercise time brings even more benefits for your health. Many studies have found that simply walking regularly can help your brain. Exercise at a pace that allows you to talk while you are moving.

The key is to be consistent, keep at it, to stay motivated and to:

- **Set yourself up for success.** Set small goals that you know you can achieve at first. Walk for 10 minutes at a time a few days a week. Once you reach that goal, add a few minutes to your exercise sessions every few weeks. Keep track of your activity so that you can see how far you have come. Tell someone about your goals and post them somewhere visible — such as on the refrigerator — so you'll be reminded of them every day.
- **Join a group or start your own.** You may find that exercise buddies keep you motivated. Join a walking group in your neighborhood or at your workplace, or start your own.
- **Find a reliable location.** If bad weather keeps you from getting outdoors, find a reliable indoor location that makes it easy to stick to your exercise routine. Health clubs are one solution, though they can be expensive. Shopping malls offer protection from the rain, cold or sun for walking.
- **Find an activity you enjoy.** If walking sounds boring, try swimming or riding your bike. Join a health club where you can try a variety of fitness classes.

If you are not currently active, check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program. He or she can recommend types of exercise that are safe for you.

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